

The Times-Dispatch.

Published Daily and Weekly

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FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 1904.

The Young Democrats.

A year or so back, when fusion became unbearable in the county of Norfolk, a number of bright and patriotic young men in that section took up the cudgels against the fusionists, and made a gallant fight in behalf of Democracy and good government. Indeed, our attention was first attracted to the deplorable situation in Norfolk county and our interest first thoroughly aroused by the appeal which we received from some of these young Democrats. To look into their bright and honest faces was to satisfy oneself that they were honest and sincere, and while the ardor and enthusiasm of youth are usually discounted by us old fellows, upon investigation we became thoroughly satisfied that the young men had not overrated the case, and that the situation was certainly as bad as they had represented it to be.

Some of these young men were approached by fusionists and warned that if they expected to have prominence in politics and success in their undertakings, they were making a mistake to fight fusion; that it would be in their interest to join with the winning side. This proposal was indignantly rejected, and the young men continued to fight the cause.

But they have become very much discouraged by the action of the Virginia Legislature. One of them, in a private letter, says: "To me, individually, the defeat before the caucus was sickening, and our defeat but emphasized the fact that, in order to have a victory before the Legislature, something more than a good cause is necessary."

The Times-Dispatch does not indulge in claptrap, nor does it encourage those who do. If we did not know that this was the sincere expression of a sincere young Democrat we should give it no place in our columns. But it is a sincere expression of discouragement and disgust. This young Democrat knew that he and his associates had espoused a righteous cause; they knew that they were right in fighting fusion and fusionists. They came to Richmond armed with the facts. They made out a complete case against the fusionists, and if they had appeared with the same proof and argument before any honest and intelligent jury, they would have obtained, without doubt, a verdict of conviction.

But the Virginia Legislature dodged the whole issue as far as it could, and by its action, or rather by its refusal to act, turned its back upon the great body of honest Democrats in Norfolk county and virtually put the seal of its sanction upon the fusion regime. It was, indeed, enough to discourage and disgust the young Democrats of that county. But we did them good cheer and good speed. Sooner or later the right will prevail; sooner or later honesty and integrity will triumph. But whether these young Democrats actually succeed or not in driving the fusionists out of power, they will have the comfort and satisfaction of having made an honest and a brave fight against a corrupt and unrighteous coalition. The safety and honor of Virginia and the welfare of the Democratic party depend upon young men of character and integrity, who have the courage to defend the right and denounce the wrong, and to resist the temptations and blandishments of political freebooters.

The Inspection System.

Deleate Ould, of Campbell, has introduced a bill in the House providing for a uniform system of bookkeeping and creating the office of traveling auditor for the several counties of the State. As mentioned in our news columns yesterday, the bill provides that the traveling auditor shall examine and report on the condition of the clerk's offices and treasurer's offices; also county and district school boards, once every year.

The bill provides further that the traveling auditor has authority to administer oaths and to summon witnesses, in order to make a thorough examination of said offices. A fine from \$100 to \$500 is enforced for a failure to keep the public accounts in the manner prescribed by the said traveling auditor, or any interference with him in the discharge of his duty.

We express the sentiment of many citizens in Virginia when we urge the General Assembly to pass this bill or some similar measure. We need the inspection system and we should inaugurate it at the earliest possible moment. If there is opposition to the bill, we should like to know whence it comes. The Lynchburg News says that four years ago the Virginia Senate passed a bill of this character, but with three dissenting votes, and sent it to the House, but before the House took hold of it, a town treasurer established headquarters in the lobby at Richmond and soon had the members flooded with protests from public officials from Bigstone Gap to Pocahontas.

"The bill was badly beaten in the House."

adds the News, "and the members, who spoke loudest and longest about it, went home to find the treasurer of his own county in default nearly \$30,000 and his personal bondsmen financially ruined."

If there is opposition to such a measure from the officeholders of the State, that is the greater reason why it should be adopted and put into execution as soon as possible. It is no reflection upon the officers of the State to have a system of regular inspection. It is a good business to do so and it is bad business to neglect it and to let officers go on year in and year out without having their accounts overhauled.

Pass this bill and pass the bill making it mandatory upon boards of supervisors to print in the newspapers their itemized statements of receipts and disbursements from month to month and two great steps will be taken in this State in the line of progress.

A Question of Law.

In further discussing the new statute on criminal assault, in its application to the Roanoke case, and in commenting on some remarks of ours on that subject, the Norfolk Landmark says:

"As the law specially authorizing private depositions in assault cases was not invoked at Roanoke, on what authority was the legal procedure conducted without the appearance of a principal witness in court? And if a principal witness may be tried and convicted in a capital case, as the law stands, without the appearance of the principal witness in court, then what was the need of a law applying specially to assault cases?"

"While the Landmark is not laboring under exactly the same difficulties in this discussion as the Northern Commonwealth, it seems the drift of the constitutional argument is advanced more strongly by the Roanoke Times than by any Northern paper we have seen. How does the Times-Dispatch understand the application of Section 8 of the Virginia Bill of Rights to the Roanoke case, as explained?"

As already explained by the Times-Dispatch, there were two indictments against Williams, one for robbery and one for criminal assault. He was tried upon the first count only, and under Section 324 of the Code, which provides that: "If any person commit robbery by partial strangulation, or suffocation, or by striking, or beating, or by violence to the person robbed, etc., the penalty shall be death."

Williams confessed guilt under this statute. He confessed that he had robbed and strangled his victim, and it was upon this confession, backed up by strong circumstantial evidence of guilt, by the testimony of the physicians who examined the victim, and by the further testimony that some of the stolen goods were found upon the person of Williams, that he was convicted.

Having sufficient evidence to convict, it was not necessary for the Commonwealth to introduce its principal witness, the victim, and as the prisoner did not exercise his right to introduce this witness, he was not called into court.

If, however, Williams had been tried upon the second count in the indictment, it would then have been necessary for the State to use the testimony of its principal witness, and in that event the new statute, authorizing private testimony by the victim of criminal assault, would have been invoked.

We trust that our esteemed contemporary does not think that we are presuming to instruct it in the law. We are simply endeavoring to answer its question.

A Brilliant Editor.

As already mentioned in the Times-Dispatch, by the death of Mr. B. F. Abell, the management of the Baltimore Sun will now devolve upon Mr. Walter W. Abell, who has practically been in charge since 1898. Although a young man, he is blessed with good judgment and has shown the highest order of ability in directing the editorial conduct of the Sun, bore the burden of the Sun's recent fight for Rayner for the United States Senate, and it is recognized in Maryland that the victory which the Sun then achieved for the people was the greatest of all the triumphs it has scored in fighting against right rule in the politics, or that State. Moreover it was a notable victory for independent journalism, and as such was one in which every conscientious and independent journalist could take pride.

The Abell family is notably a family of newspaper men and the talent seems to have been handed down from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. Mr. Walter W. Abell is a worthy successor in line, and the Sun is to be congratulated, indeed, that its affairs are committed to such a discreet and yet fearless and honest editor.

The Birds and the Planter.

The Southern Planter for March, J. P. Jackson, editor and general manager, is an interesting number. It is crowded with readable articles appropriate to the season and discusses editorially a number of subjects on which the Virginia agriculturist should be well informed.

The Planter has a good word to say for the crow, which it asserts is the farmer's friend, not his enemy.

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